Northern Illinois P-20 Network
Adult Learner Summary of Progress February 10, 2015

**Goal**  
Increase higher education enrollments of adult learners, who are essential to meeting the goal of increasing the proportion of adults in Illinois with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by 2025.

**White House Commitment**  
Increase enrollment of adult learners in higher education across the region.

**Work Group Members**
- Meryl Sussman (NIU) Facilitator
- John Cowan (NIU)
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- Jane Smith (COD)

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<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>On Track for 9/15 Completion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree Completion</td>
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<td>Identify gaps in bachelor degree completion programs for adult learners with associate degrees, including AAS degrees, and/or professional certifications.</td>
<td>Still in Progress Work with the Articulation group to provide more seamless transitions from 2 to 4 year institutions through tools like tightly-aligned pathways.</td>
<td>Next Steps Provide support for better understanding of the IAI articulation agreement.</td>
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| Prior Learning Assessments | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Document best practices at leading institutions across the country with prior learning assessments for possible implementation at northern Illinois institutions. | Still in Progress The group conducted a survey of the P-20 Network institutions regarding their adult learner programs, which produced the following findings:  
- Four sites listed the population of adult learners at 26-75% of total enrollment.  
- All respondents offer assessments of prior learning, which fall into three categories – academic, military, and business and industry credits.  
- All respondents offer some form of credit for prior learning and are looking at practical ways to offer more of these options to adult learners. | Next Steps Collaborate with the regional e-Portfolio consortium to develop a consistent process for e-Portfolios for adult learners that can be used across the region to communicate clearly with admissions counselors, academic advisors, departments, and institutions. |
### Best Practices for Adults

| Share successful approaches for adult learners across network institutions, including flexible scheduling, alternative delivery modes, reduced time to degree completion, and solutions to out-of-district fee issues. | **Still in Progress** All respondents are employing special strategies to recruit adult learners, but there are wide variations across the region. The survey identified 13 severe barriers for adult learners; the top four were critical courses offered only during the day, courses only offered face to face, no allowance for prior learning, and generational tensions with younger students. | **Next Steps** Research and provide recommendations on effective course scheduling options including block scheduling, evening or weekend offerings, accelerated models, cohort models; and an adult learner concierge or caseworker to provide one-on-one comprehensive advising in a one-stop manner, rather than visits to many different offices and departments. |

### Models for Adult Learner Support

| Develop a model for better serving adult learners across the region through collaboration among network institutions. | **Completed** Wide agreement exists on the descriptions of adult learners – 24 years of age or older; veteran or actively serving member of the armed services; returning to school after four or more years; assuming multiple adult roles as parent, spouse/partner, employee and student. **Still in Progress** Information on successful recruitment and retention practices can be shared on a regional level. Current methods of recruitment include connections to employers and associations; chambers of commerce/workforce development groups; employment fairs; targeted mailings and newsletters; signage on campus; web-based approaches such as links to registrar, course catalog, adult learner programs. | **Next Steps** Consider regional communications strategies for conveying the importance of a bachelor’s degree early on in the process, while being respectful of each student’s individual goals and pursuits. |